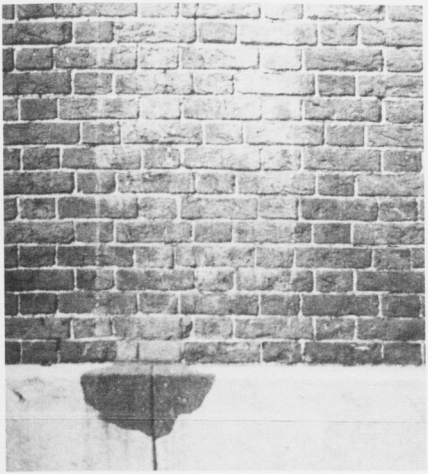

Figure 3. The hazy appearance of a portion of the brick is caused by a residue resulting from cleaning. This film occurred in spite of thorough rinsing. Test patches such as this should always be allowed to weather prior to continuing with the cleaning.

The cleaning budget should include money to pay for these tests. Usually contractors are more willing to conduct a variety of tests if they are reimbursed for their time and materials, particularly if the tests include methods with which the contractor is not familiar.

When feasible, test areas should be allowed to weather for an extended period prior to evaluation. A waiting period of a full year is not unreasonable in order to expose the masonry to a full range of seasons. For any building which is considered historically important, the delay is insignificant compared to the potential damage and disfigurement which may arise from use of an incompletely tested method (Figs. 2-5).

Potential Problems Of Cleaning

Water Cleaning: Water cleaning methods include: (1) low pressure wash over an extended period, (2) moderate to high pressure wash, and (3) steam. Bristle brushes frequently are used to supplement the water wash. All joints, including mortar and sealants, must be sound in order to minimize water penetration to the interior.

Porous masonry may absorb excess amounts of water during the cleaning process and cause damage within the wall or on interior surfaces. Normally, however, water penetrates only part way through even moderately absorbant masonry materials.

Excess water also can bring soluble salts from within the masonry to the surface, forming efflorescences (Fig. 2); in dry climates, the water may evaporate inside the masonry, leaving the salts slightly in back of the surface. The damage which can be caused by soluble salts is explained in more detail later in this leaflet. Efflorescence usually can be traced to a source other than a single water wash.

Another source of surface disfigurement is chemicals such as iron and copper in the water supply; even "soft" water may contain deleterious amounts of these chemicals. Water methods cannot be used during periods of cold weather because water within the masonry can freeze, causing spalling and cracking. Since a wall may take over a week to dry after cleaning, no water cleaning should be permitted for several days prior to the first average frost date, or even earlier if local forecasts predict cold weather.

In spite of these potential problems, water methods generally are the simplest to carry out, the safest for the building and the environment, and the least expensive.

Figure 4. Sandblasting has rounded the corners of this marble capital and pitted the formerly smooth surface. Not only is the stone harmed visually, the increased roughness of the surface also will collect new dirt more quickly than smooth stone.

Chemical cleaning: Since most chemical cleaners are water based, they have many of the potential problems of plain water. Additional problems of chemical cleaning agents have been mentioned in the discussion of environmental concerns.

Chemical cleaners have other problems as well. Some types of masonry are subject to direct attack by cleaning chemicals. Marble and limestone, for example, are dissolved easily by acidic cleaners, even in dilute forms. Another problem may be a change in the color of the masonry caused by the chemicals, not by removal of dirt; the cleaner also may leave a hazy residue in spite of heavy rinsing (Fig. 3). In addition, chemicals can react with components of mortar, stone, or brick to create soluble salts which can form efflorescences, as mentioned earlier. Historic brick buildings are particularly susceptible to damage from hydrochloric (muriatic) acid, although it is, unfortunately, widely used on these structures.

Mechanical cleaning: Grit blasters, grinders, and sanding discs all operate by *abrading the dirt off the surface* of the masonry, rather than reacting with the dirt and masonry as in water and chemical methods. Since the abrasives do not differentiate between the dirt and the masonry, *some erosion of the masonry surface is inevitable with mechanical methods, especially blasting.* Although a skilled operator can minimize this erosion, some erosion will still take place. In the case of brick, soft stone, detailed carvings, or polished surfaces, even minimal erosion is unacceptable (Figs. 4 and 5). Brick, a fired product, is hardest on the outside where the temperatures were highest; the loss of this "skin" of the brick exposes the softer inner portion to more rapid deterioration. Abrasion of intricate details causes a rounding of sharp corners and other loss of delicate features, while abrasion of polished surfaces removes the polished quality of stone. Mechanical methods, therefore, should never be used on these surfaces and should be used with extreme caution on others.

Grit blasting, unfortunately, still is widely used in spite of these serious effects. In most cases, blasting will leave